

Spying High

The case of the not-so-secret agents

Characters

PRIME MINISTER OF GLOCCA-MAURETANIA

FRITZ

HOUSEKEEPER

AGENT B-8-W

SETTING: *Living room of the Prime Minister's home. A desk with a blotter pad and a telephone on it stands at right, and a sofa is at left center. There is a rug on the floor.*

AT RISE: PRIME MINISTER, who is heavily bearded, is talking on the phone.

PRIME MINISTER (*Into phone*): Your Excellency, the situation is critical. The soldiers, the militia, and the sailors are in revolt. And the Queen is in the parlor, eating bread and honey. You know how she's always counted her calories. If she's eating bread and honey, it's a sure sign that she's given up hope. I tell you, we are on the eve of revolution, and our beloved country, Glocca-Mauretania, is about to go down the drain. . . . (*Strikes a pose*) Oh, you can count on me, Your Excellency. I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me a passport so I can get out of this mess. . . .

Yes, Your Excellency, I intend to fly! To flee! (FRITZ enters, dragging a huge steamer trunk. PRIME MINISTER notices him and continues talking into phone.) As a matter of fact, my trusty old family retainer has just brought in my trunk. I must start packing this very instant. The boat leaves in twenty minutes, and if I'm not safely aboard, my life in Glocca-Mauretania won't be worth a plugged pfennig. Goodbye. (*Hangs up*)

FRITZ: Where do you want me to put this trunk, Your Prime Ministership?

PRIME MINISTER: Anywhere, anywhere. The important thing is to start packing at once. (*Emotionally*) Ah, Fritz, Fritz, my trusty old family retainer. Who'd ever have thought we'd be parting like this? But I must take it like a man. No time for sentiment. Let's get cracking with the packing.

FRITZ: Yes, Your Prime Ministership. What can I do?

PRIME MINISTER: Ring for the housekeeper. I have some instructions for her.

FRITZ: Yes, sir. (*He goes to back wall, pulls bell cord.*)

PRIME MINISTER (*To audience*): Notice how cleverly I got him to turn his back. Now, while he's not looking, I'll take these secret documents (*Pulls an envelope labeled "Secret Documents" out of his coat pocket*) and hide them. (*As FRITZ eavesdrops, exaggeratedly and obviously bending over and cupping his hand to his ear*) I know he's my trusty old family retainer—but in these troubled times, Glocca-Mauretania is overrun with spies. You can't be too careful. And if these secret documents should fall into enemy hands—ach! I shudder to think of the consequences. (*He hides envelope under desk blotter.*)

FRITZ (*Quickly resuming his dignified manner*): I have rung for the housekeeper.

PRIME MINISTER: Good, good. We've no time to lose.

(HOUSEKEEPER, in floor-length black dress and white wig, enters.)

HOUSEKEEPER (In a high, creaky voice): You rang, sir?

PRIME MINISTER: Ah, there you are, Mrs. Glockenspiel. Do you have my clothes ready?

HOUSEKEEPER: Everything is laid out in your bedroom, Your Prime Ministership.

PRIME MINISTER: Good, good. Come along, then, and help me carry the things down here. (He and HOUSEKEEPER exit.)

FRITZ: Aha! They've gone! (To audience) He thinks I'm a trusty old family retainer. Little does he realize that in actuality I am a—ha, ha!—spy. (Goes to desk, takes envelope, hides it under rug, then holds his wrist watch to his mouth) Hello, is this H.Q.? Agent 43½ here. I have the secret documents. Oops! Someone is coming. Must sign off now. (He straightens up and majestically walks out down left, as HOUSEKEEPER enters up center, looks around, sees room is empty, comes downstage and speaks to audience.)

HOUSEKEEPER (In creaky voice): They all think I'm the housekeeper, Mrs. Glockenspiel. Little do they realize that in actuality I am a—ha, ha!—spy. (Straightens up and whips off wig, revealing male identity. Looks around, sees edge of envelope sticking out from rug, takes it, and hides it under sofa cushion. Pulls up skirt, revealing trousers, and takes walkie-talkie out of pocket) Hello, is this Central Operations? Agent X.L.Y. here. I have the secret documents. More details later. Over and out. (Looks around furtively, puts radio back into pocket, puts on wig, slinks out down right. Brief pause. Then, lid of steamer trunk rises. AGENT B-8-W, cloak-and-dagger type, emerges and looks around.)

B-8-W (To audience): You guessed it, folks. I, too, am a—

ha, ha!—spy. (Takes envelope from sofa, puts it under blotter on desk. Then takes off shoe and speaks into it)

Hello, is this Operations Scheduling? Agent B-8-W here. I have the secret documents. Wait! I think the Prime Minister is coming. I'll check back with you later. (Goes out down left as PRIME MINISTER enters, followed by FRITZ.)

PRIME MINISTER (Going to blotter on desk and lifting it): Ah, everything is just as I left it.

FRITZ (Doing double take): The documents! They're right where you left them!

PRIME MINISTER: How do you know where I left them, Fritz?

FRITZ (Uncomfortably): Would you believe E.S.P.?

PRIME MINISTER (Blandly): Not that it matters. You see, those aren't the real documents.

FRITZ: Those aren't the real documents?

PRIME MINISTER: No, that was just a dummy test. I had a feeling that this place was overflowing with spies. I wanted to be sure. Well, I guess I was wrong. Now I need have no fear of leaving the *real* secret documents.

FRITZ: You want me to turn my back again?

PRIME MINISTER: That won't be necessary. I've already hidden them—right in this very room. But why do I stand here chattering? I must fly! I must flee! I must get cracking with the packing! (He goes out up center, carrying the envelope.)

FRITZ: I must find those documents! (He goes to desk and begins rummaging about in drawers. HOUSEKEEPER enters, goes to sofa, pulls up cushion.)

HOUSEKEEPER (In male voice): Curses! The documents are gone!

FRITZ (Looks up): What do you mean, Mrs. Glockenspiel?

HOUSEKEEPER (*Startled, whirls around, puts on "creaky" voice*): Why—why, Fritz! I didn't notice you.

FRITZ (*Menacingly*): You're not Mrs. Glockenspiel, are you? (*Strides over and whips off HOUSEKEEPER's wig*) You're—you're Charlie Culpepper!

HOUSEKEEPER (*Back in male voice*): How do you know my real name?

FRITZ (*Happily*): Don't you recognize me?

HOUSEKEEPER (*Looking at him closely*): It isn't—it isn't—

FRITZ: It is! Mervyn Mickle!

HOUSEKEEPER (*Shaking hands with him enthusiastically*): Merve, you old so-and-so!

FRITZ: Charlie, old buddy! Gee, it's good to see you! (*Suddenly*) But hush! Someone is coming! Quick, over here! (*They move to side of stage as B-8-W enters. He goes to desk, lifts blotter.*)

B-8-W: Curses! The documents! They're gone!

FRITZ and HOUSEKEEPER (*In unison*): Herbie Haliburton!

B-8-W (*In delighted surprise*): Hey! Imagine running into you guys here! (*They all gather together at center in a jovial, congenial group.*)

FRITZ: How many years has it been?

B-8-W: Not since the reunion five years ago, I think.

HOUSEKEEPER: It's just like old times. (*Nostalgically*) Oh, the happy, carefree years, when we were all students together at dear old S.M.U.

B-8-W (*Sighing*): Spy Master's University. Who ever dreamed we'd be running into each other like this? To think, we were undergraduates together—and here we all are on the same caper.

FRITZ: Say! How about singing the Alma Mater—for old times' sake?

HOUSEKEEPER: Good idea! (*They gather into a formal pose, facing front.*)

ALL (*Singing to the tune of "Far Above Cayuga's Waters"*):

Spying is a great profession,

Noble, good, and true.

So to join the great profession,
Come to S.M.U.

Learn the arts of cloak and dagger,
Mastering disguise.

And when you have graduated
Join the world of spies.

B-8-W: What memories it brings back! Sort of chokes me up.

FRITZ: Remember the time I almost flunked Introduction to Breaking Codes—and you tutored me, Charlie?

HOUSEKEEPER: Yeah, but it was you, Merv, that helped me with my Advanced Espionage. And good old Herbie, here—how would we ever have passed the Fingerprints Final if it weren't for him?

B-8-W: Say, I think we ought to write a letter to Dean Featheringill and tell him about how we all ran into each other like this. I'll bet he'd get a big kick out of it.

HOUSEKEEPER (*Soberly*): You mean you haven't heard?

B-8-W: Heard? Heard what?

HOUSEKEEPER: Poor old Dean Featheringill disappeared. Two years ago.

B-8-W (*Hat over heart*): Say, that's too bad. He was one of the great ones. Spying won't be the same without him.

FRITZ (*Happily*): Why don't we all go out and get ourselves some dinner tonight? We can really talk over old times then.

BOTH (*Ad lib*): Great! Good idea! Let's go! (*Etc.*)

HOUSEKEEPER (*Taking out walkie-talkie*): Let me call my office and tell them I'll be working late.

B-8-W (*Admiringly*): What a great unit! Gee, my outfit

must be way behind yours. I'm still using one of those old-fashioned shoe radios.

FRITZ: What about me? I'm stuck with a two-way wrist watch. That sort of thing went out with Dick Tracy!

HOUSEKEEPER (*Sitting down on edge of desk*): Let me get my call through, huh, fellows? (*As he sits, he knocks over a stack of books, revealing a Manila envelope.*)

FRITZ (*Rushing to it*): Look! Hidden among the books! The real secret documents! (*Holds up envelope on which is lettered "Real Secret Documents."*)

B-8-W (*Admiringly*): Gee, Mervyn, you graduated Number One in the class, and you're still the top spy. No wonder you got hold of the secret documents first.

FRITZ (*Handing the envelope to HOUSEKEEPER*): But they really belong to Charlie, here. After all, if he hadn't knocked over the books, we would never have seen them.

HOUSEKEEPER: Oh, but I couldn't take them, Mervyn.

FRITZ: But I insist, Charlie!

HOUSEKEEPER (*Taking envelope*): That's awfully nice of you. But I really think I ought to give them to Herbie. (*Hands envelope to B-8-W.*) After all, if it weren't for him, I'd never have graduated from Spy Masters University in the first place.

B-8-W (*Taking envelope*): Oh, really, Charlie, I couldn't accept this. (*Hands envelope to FRITZ*) No, Merv found them first. What's right is right. You both know Rule 27 in the Spy Manual as well as I do.

ALL (*Reciting in unison, hands over hearts*): Spy Manual Rule 27. Finders keepers, losers weepers.

PRIME MINISTER (*From offstage*): Fritz! Fritz! Where are you?

FRITZ (*Anxiously*): Someone's coming! Quick, you guys—hide! (*HOUSEKEEPER and B-8-W duck behind sofa as PRIME MINISTER enters.*)

PRIME MINISTER: Fritz, I've been looking all over for you. (*Suddenly*) But what's this? What's this?

FRITZ (*Blankly*): What's what?

PRIME MINISTER: You're holding the real secret documents! How on earth did you find them?

FRITZ (*Lamely*): I guess this is my day for E.S.P.

PRIME MINISTER: Well, you can just hand them over. I'm going to destroy them. I just had a telegram from the chief of staff. It seems the revolution has been canceled.

FRITZ: In that case, may I have the evening off? I want to have dinner with a couple of old friends I ran into.

PRIME MINISTER: Friends?

FRITZ: You can come out now, fellows. (*HOUSEKEEPER and B-8-W pop up from behind sofa.*)

PRIME MINISTER (*Looking at them a moment*): Well . . . all right, Fritz. You can have dinner with these men--on one condition.

FRITZ: What's that?

PRIME MINISTER: That you invite me to come along.

FRITZ: But what would a dignified old man like Your Prime Ministership have in common with these friends of mine?

PRIME MINISTER: You mean you haven't guessed? (*He whips off his false beard.*)

OTHERS (*Amazed; in unison*): Dean Featheringill!

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I'm sure not Mata Hari!

ALL (*Hands over hearts, singing*):

Spying is a great profession,
Noble, good, and true.
So to join the great profession,
Come to S.M.U.
(*Blackout and quick curtain*)

THE END